

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, December 26, 1877, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. (December? 1877.) My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am so sorry that Christmas is so near and no word or gift of love and greeting has gone to you. The library table has long been encumbered with the Christmas magazines and annuals which Alec has collected for his father, but day by day has slipped away so fully occupied that he has never been able to send them. I am so busy and as Alec fears to 1st me go out alone I can do nothing. We received such a nice letter from you and Mr. Bell a few days ago. I am sorry you did not quite approve of our going housekeeping but I think it is more because you could not know exactly how matters stood with us. It may be expensive our going housekeeping, but the rent of this whole house is barely more than that of the two rooms we had in Jermyn St., and as the season began the price would be raised so on the whole this is cheaper. At all events the improvement in comfort and happiness to us both is worth a little more expense. Alec says he is so glad we moved because I am so much better and stronger now that I have had so much to occupy me and keep me from being homesick. He himself has improved in health, at Jermyn St. there was no inducement for him to rise early and he was fast getting into the habit of breakfasting at half past ten or eleven, and as a consequence was seldom free from headache. Now we breakfast at about half past eight and he thinks it very late when he stays up until two at night, he often feels cross and headachy when I awake him and begs hard to stay in bed, but if I am firm after breakfast the headache has quite disappeared, and he is bright and thankful he has been awakened.

Of course I would much prefer to come home if possible but so far from it's being safe for me to cross the ocean in Spring Alec will not now let me cross the channel with him or go

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a long railway journey. All the doctors have especially warned us against it. If we were at home Alec says 2 he would not have risked bringing me to Canada now.

So Carrie has another little one, I had no idea. How pleased and happy she must be. I hope she was not sick long.

I suppose you are all busy with preparations for Christmas now, I am so sorry to think that now for the first time your son will not be with you, I know it must be so lonely for you and you will hardly see the great advantage of having a daughter-in-law. But I hope it will be all right next year. So have had most of our presents today because Col. Reynolds fears he cannot be with us at Christmas so he brought me his gift of a pretty gold Roman bell that tinkles as I wear it suspended by it's chain around my neck, and Alec wrapped him up in the soft long dressing gown we had bought for him for he is tired and worn out in long hard work for himself and for us. I thought it hardly a proper present, but it turned out about the best thing as he said he had meant to get one like it. Rather against my will Alec donned his gown, my present, and insists on keeping it to show to Chester and Mr. George Minchin who are downstairs now in deep confabulation with him, I wish they would come some other day because on Sundays Alec is my property, and I think I have done enough in lending him to Col. Reynolds all the afternoon. Yesterday Alec's old friends Dr. Murray and Mrs. Murray came to spend the afternoon with us. Alec says they are not much changed, but Mrs. Murray has five children now, four boys and a girl, the youngest now two years old. She brought the oldest boy with her a fine fellow of eleven who walks twenty-five miles a day without fatigue. His name is Henry the others have rather romantic names such as Athelbert and — I forget the rest.

I have been having my sheets, pillow cases etc., sowed in the house, and as they are not finished yet I do not feel quite settled. 3 Then Alec has not yet succeeded in securing a short-hand reporter and Secretary so until he does nothing can be definitely arranged. Alec has had boards put up all around the walls of his two rooms and the lower laboratory is already quite full of scientific instruments. He is perfectly delighted with it. Alec will show

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the telephone to the Queen at Osborne in a fortnight and I believe I am to accompany him. Immediately afterwards the prospectus of the new Telephone Company will be issued, and the shares put into the market. I believe the Duke of Sutherland will be president, Sir William Thomson has accepted the post of consulting electrician Alec is electrician with a salary of one thousand pounds a year. I believe the shares are sold for ten pounds. (This is confidential and unsettled and must not get into print.) (This last was written in by Dr. Bell)

My servants are working well together and I have good times making dessert, and my preparations have always turned out well, although I was considerably surprised the other day when my velvet cream which should have been white was brought up brown.

Alec goes to Paris on the 26th., and returns for New Years, Chester comes to spend the nights here and an old friend of mine I hope will come too.

December 26th., I have found this letter in my drawer, and I send it as I have no time to write another. I hope you got our telegram alright and knew we were thinking of you. The boy brought it back to know if Ontario was in the United States or Canada.

We dined with Mr. and Mrs. Home, Mr. and Mrs. Fullerton and Mr. Minchin were amongst the guests, there were fourteen of us. We had an enormous cod fish, and huge mountains of beef bacon and turkey. I never saw a table so literally groaning, and was much edified. The plum pudding I thought unworthy its companions it was so small. Noel had a Xmas tree and one of the candles caught fire, and in stooping to put it out Alec burst his trousers for the 4 second time, though they were made larger only two months ago. I believe Mr. Home proposed somebody's health, but it did not "take" and there were no more toasts, but the dinner was unusually bright and lively all the same. Almost the whole of last night's party have been here this evening to see the telephone and it is now twelve o'clock. Alec I believe goes to Berlin tomorrow.

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With love and best wishes for a very happy New Year to you all, believe me,

Affectionately, your daughter, Mabel Bell.